

**SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY**  
**AGRICULTURAL TOURISM & DIRECT MARKETING**  
**LAND USE ORDINANCE REVISION UPDATE #3**  
May 2007

The process to implement Ag Policy 6: *Visitor Serving and Retail Commercial Use and Facilities* and Ag Policy 31: *Recreational Use of Agricultural Lands* from the Agriculture and Open Space Element (AOSE) of the County General Plan continues. This process is intended to implement these policies by updating existing standards and creating new standards relating to tourism, recreation and direct marketing on agricultural lands. The process was authorized by the Board of Supervisors on August 6, 2005.

Beyond implementing General Plan policies so that the county Land Use Ordinance is consistent with these policies, other intended outcomes of the process include the:

- continued preservation of agricultural land,
- protection of the county's rural character,
- creation of consistent and enforceable standards, and
- introduction of non-agricultural activities that can produce supplemental income while being compatible with both agriculture and rural life.

Since September 2006, Planning staff has been working to develop draft ordinance language for visitor, retail commercial and recreational uses. In January 2007, initial draft ordinance language was made public addressing the following uses:

**EVENTS**

- Agricultural Events
- Temporary Events
- Special Events

**RURAL RECREATION**

- Incidental Camping
- Organizational Camping
- Dude Ranches

On January 25, 2007 the AgTourism & Direct Marketing Work Group held a meeting to review the ordinance revision drafts listed above. The two drafts were also provided to the Ag Liaison Advisory Board (ALAB) and the Community Advisory Councils (CACs) for review and comment. Since January, presentations have been made regarding the events ordinance to a number of advisory councils. ALAB meetings were held on January 29, February 26, March 26, April 23, and May 14 to review the drafts and discuss how to implement the policy requirement for visitor uses to be "*clearly incidental and secondary to the primary agricultural use.*"

**Events**

Changes are being proposed to both the Inland and the Coastal Land Use Ordinances relating to events in the three use categories listed above. The Planning Department intends to move these proposed ordinance amendments forward separate from other drafts addressing visitor and recreational uses. This is due to the fact that the Board of Supervisors, on November 23, 2004, authorized changes to the Land Use Ordinance in relation to *Temporary Outdoor Commercial Entertainment Licenses* (Chapter 6.56 of the County Code) and associated types of activities.

The Planning Department intends to make ordinance revisions based on public comment and conduct environmental review on the events ordinance in order to prepare and release a Planning Commission draft by late in the summer. Planning Commission review followed by Board of Supervisors hearing will be scheduled in the fall.

## **Rural Recreation**

At this time, the “Rural Recreation” draft will be retained and packaged with other ordinance amendments relating to visitor, retail commercial and recreational uses of agricultural lands. This will enable all parties to consider all visitor uses on agricultural lands as a package rather than reviewing each use in isolation. The other visitor uses include farm sales such as u-picks, farm stands and farm stores; rural accommodation including farm stays, bed and breakfasts or inns; food processing of farm products; and signs.

## **Current Issues**

### **Ensuring Accessory Uses Are Incidental To Agricultural Uses**

Ag Policy 6 relates to visitor and retail commercial uses on agricultural lands and states that these uses are to be “*clearly incidental and secondary to the primary ag use of the site and compatible with the agricultural use of the site.*”

On March 26, 2007, ALAB supported a concept developed out of the Working Group which charges the Ag Commissioner’s staff to provide a clearance letter verifying the presence of an adequate agricultural use located on the site of proposed visitor, commercial or recreational uses.

On April 30, 2007, ALAB supported an approach that would require an agricultural site to have the following amount of agricultural use in order to obtain a clearance letter for any secondary visitor use:

- *Irrigated crops planted on 18 acres prime soil*
- *40 acres of irrigated row crops, orchard, or vineyard on nonprime soil*
- *160 acres of dry-farmed grain or hay*
- *320 acres rangeland used for cattle or other animals*

ALAB further requested that the Agriculture Department develop an exception or appeal process that would allow sites that do not meet these minimum standards, but are producing high value crops or commodities, to be allowed to have appropriate visitor and retail commercial uses. Ag Department staff is currently evaluating the ALAB and Workgroup’s approaches to develop standards for the certification letter.

## **Timeline for Completion**

The Workgroup will meet to discuss the remainder of the drafts as soon as they are made available from Planning Department staff. Ongoing review and evaluation of the drafts by County staff, updates to the Workgroup, ag industry, the public and the Ag Liaison Board will continue through the summer of 2007. The completed recommendations will then undergo Environmental Review, followed by public hearings by both the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

## **For More Information**

Information about agricultural tourism and direct marketing is posted and updated on the Agriculture Department’s website at [www.slocounty.ca.gov/agcomm](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/agcomm). For more information about this project contact Brenda W. Ouwkerk, County Department of Agriculture at 805-781-1556 or Karen Nall, County Planning and Building Department at 805-781-5606.